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Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
109th Congress**

**Hearing on “Threat Convergence Along the Border: Will Drug Trafficking
Techniques Provide Some Answers?”**

June 14, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for holding this important hearing to examine efforts by the Department of Homeland Security and the Drug Enforcement Administration to address narcotics smuggling as one among many serious threats to homeland security at both the Northern and Southern U.S. borders.

Mr. Chairman, our outlook on border security has changed substantially since the attacks of 9-11. As the independent, bipartisan National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (also known as the 9-11 Commission) noted in its July 2004 report on the 9-11 terrorist attacks,

“In the decade before September 11, 2001, border security-encompassing travel, entry, and immigration was not seen as a national security matter. Public figures voiced concern about the “war on drugs,” the right level and kind of immigration, problems along the southwest border, migration crises originating in the Caribbean and elsewhere, or the growing criminal traffic in humans. The immigration system as a whole was widely viewed as increasingly dysfunctional and badly in need of reform. In national security circles, however, only smuggling of weapons of mass destruction carried weight, not the entry of terrorists who might use such weapons or the presence of associated foreign-born terrorists.”

Our heightened attention to terrorism and different terrorist methods do not change the fact that some 20,000 Americans die as a result of drug abuse each year – nearly seven times the number of lives lost on 9-11. It is therefore critical that we not lose our focus on drugs when it comes to protecting America’s borders. And Congress has taken steps to ensure that this does not happen.

To ensure that attention to the counternarcotics mission would not take a back seat to other priorities within the component agencies of the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Congress specifically provided that the Department’s primary mission would include the responsibility to “monitor connections between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism, coordinate

efforts to sever such connections, and otherwise contribute to efforts to interdict illegal drug trafficking.”

Congress has since established within DHS the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement (CNE) to ensure a high profile for the counterdrug mission within DHS and to facilitate coordination of counterdrug intelligence among DHS component agencies and between DHS agencies and outside governmental agencies. Unfortunately, the President’s FY 2006 budget request chooses not to fund the DHS Counternarcotics Enforcement Office. This is unacceptable in light of the threat that illegal drugs pose and the fact that DHS is the lead cabinet-level agency for providing drug enforcement along our nation’s borders.

According the National Drug Intelligence Center’s *National Drug Threat Assessment* for 2005, the Southwest Border states are primary points of entry for major illicit drug threats such as Colombian and Peruvian cocaine, South American and Mexican heroin, Mexican methamphetamine, and Mexican and Colombian marijuana. The Northern Border states are primary entry points for Canadian marijuana, Southeastern heroin, and MDMA (or “ecstasy”).

Given this reality, it is imperative that DHS component agencies cooperate fully with each other and with DEA and other sources of operational and intelligence support to interdict drugs both at the borders and before they reach our borders and shores, in the transit zone.

Our witnesses will give us insight into the level and quality of interagency cooperation that is being directed toward the various threats to homeland security that enter the United States through our borders and ports of entry, including the extent to which counterdrug efforts are emphasized and used to improve efforts to prevent terrorism, human trafficking, and illegal immigration.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and yield back the balance of my time.

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